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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 004805

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DIRECTOR GENERAL PEARSON  
ALSO FOR HR/CDA/ML/SPEC - ROMEO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: OMS OF THE FUTURE: NEA REGIONAL OMS CONFERENCE - CAIRO, EGYPT

REF: A. STATE 115847

[1B.](#) STATE 64893  
[1C.](#) STATE 54943  
[1D.](#) STATE 32780

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Summary  
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[11.](#) Twenty-eight participants from 21 NEA posts joined the eight Cairo OMSes for the first NEA Regional OMS conference hosted in Egypt February 21-23. Conference topics centered on the OMS of the future. Gary Pergl, Director of the Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA), opened the conference with an address on his "View of the OMS of the Future." Other conference speakers addressed EERS; Cultural Diversity; the Year in Review; E-Diplomacy and the OMS Webpage; OMSes from other Diplomatic Missions; SiprNet Resources and Microsoft Certification; Bidding and Lobbying; and Ambassador Welch's "A-Team of Tomorrow". DVCs with then-Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman and then-NEA Assistant Secretary of State Bill Burns ended the second day. The final day was devoted to OMS roundtable discussions and lessons learned.

[12.](#) The Office of Management and Training Division (OMT) at FSI presented two training opportunities on the margins of the conference: "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" and "Managing Up." The first course, offered before the conference began and for the first time to an all-OMS group, was "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" on February 15-[117](#). At the end of the conference, "Managing Up" was offered on February 24. This landmark conference was open to any OMS regardless of level or experience. End summary.

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Summation of Conference Topics  
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[13.](#) Director of the Office of Career Development and Assignments, Gary Pergl, opened the conference with an address focusing on timely information on new OMS promotion criteria, recently formally presented in cables from Washington on the Career Development Program for Specialists (refs A and B). His awareness of OMS issues and willingness to discuss them was encouraging and informative.

[14.](#) E-Diplomacy and the OMS Webpage presented by Theresa Tierney, Office Management Practice Expert in the Office of e-Diplomacy, examined the many resources available to OMSes and how the webpage has brought many of those resources to one site. This kind of knowledge-sharing environment is an excellent starting point for other post-specific webpages, handbooks, etc. Participants recommended more OMS training on maintaining websites and provision of a point of contact to help with questions down the road.

[15.](#) OMS Coordinator from HR/CDA Claudia Romeo and Director of OMT Donna Stoffer presented a session entitled "The Year in Review" and reviewed some of the recommendations from the 2004 Washington OMS Conference that have been put in motion. One overwhelmingly common request from the Washington conference was more training, domestically and overseas. Washington is beginning to respond. This regional conference brought two training opportunities for OMSes. This session highlighted many more courses open to the OMS at FSI including: PK 250 - First Assignment at Main State; PK 205 - How to Arrange Travel using Travel Manager 80; PK 330 - New Ways to Problem Solve; PK 302 - Professional Development for the OMS; numerous Fast Track courses; and new certification offered through SAIT/OMT giving Microsoft certification plus Siprnet, Portal X, and Word comprehensive training.

[16.](#) The panel discussion with Junior and Senior generalists "What We Expect from Each Other", revealed a surprising point. A-100 training does not include discussion of interacting with OMSes. At the least, junior officers need a better definition of OMS roles during their orientation. Better would be a combination of some aspects of JO/OMS training and sharing of OMS concerns with incoming officers.

17. A breakout session presented by Cairo's HR Officers Shelia Moyer and Angelika Chin discussed "Career Mobility". For the OMS this is a well-identified need. Given that OMS advancement is limited, OMSes can consider the Mustang program and the Functional Specialization Program (FSP).

18. "EERs - It's all about You", presented by Pat Keegan, an OMS in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and a veteran of many promotion panels, was a good refresher with helpful guidance and insight into how promotions are negotiated in the panel. One should be proactive and in control of one's EER for best possible results. It would be interesting to review examples of high, medium, and low ranked EERs to see what the panel sees.

19. Theresa Tierney presented the SiprNet and Microsoft certification presentation was informative and showed the need for more training on SiprNet. More training is becoming available at FSI.

110. "Bidding and Lobbying," a breakout session with Gary Pergl and Claudia Romeo, provided excellent information, but more information on the actual process would have been helpful. Many OMS spend most of their career overseas and the intricacies of the bidding process are not as apparent from outside Washington.

111. The presentation by two FSNs from Embassy Cairo on "Cultural Diversity: A Mosaic of Life" reaffirmed how important cultural awareness is at any post. Its importance should be continuously reiterated to Americans in the NEA region, and similar FSN presentations should be part of every post's new arrival orientation. The session also reinforced the FSN as a valuable resource for asking questions across cultures.

112. The panel discussion including OMSes from the Mexican, French, and Italian diplomatic missions in Cairo was enlightening and made American OMSes appreciative of benefits that come with the OMS track such as pay raises, diplomatic immunity, moving allowances, etc. Participants suggested that there should be more outreach at all posts to OMSes of other missions.

113. Ambassador Welch's "A-Team of Tomorrow" was a down-to-earth presentation with an inspiring message and positive attitude, showing that Ambassadors do make a difference at every level of an embassy. The discussion revealed that newly appointed Ambassadors all attend a seminar at FSI, which, unlike A-100 for entry-level officers, does include segments on working with OMSes.

114. Digital Video Conferences (DVCs) from Washington with Ambassadors Grossman and Burns were well received. Participants discussed with Ambassador Grossman the issue of employees who were awarded Meritorious Step Increases (MSIs) by promotion panels but would not receive them because they were at the top step of their grade. Ambassador Grossman said he would look into it, and did, with a positive result (refs C and D).

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The Parking Lot  
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115. Throughout the conference participants posted ideas, suggestions, and questions on the parking lot bulletin board. These issues, which were discussed at the end of the conference, were either of interest to the larger group or arose from discussions during smaller group meetings in the conference. These ideas and questions included:

--Should there be an OMS representative at AFSA?

--Improving training OMSes receive on entering the Foreign Service to make it more applicable to real situations out in the field. (Note: Entry-level conference participants felt their training was much improved over the training OMSes received in earlier years. End note.)

--Changing the OMS title to something requiring less explanation.

--As OMSes often supervise EFM and LES, leadership and management training available to OMSes at all levels.

--What awards are eligible to post on your employee profile?

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Roundtable Discussions  
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116. The OMS Roundtable on the last day of the conference offered a forum to sum up issues and options for addressing them. After reviewing the parking lot questions, the four

areas of interest - promotions; training and knowledge; OMS representation; and Y-tours - were identified and discussed in small groups.

¶17. Suggestions for promotions included: make entry level at Grade 6 instead of 7; create positions that open up higher levels of advancement; and budget money to include MSIs for those at the top of their step/grade. Other incentives for increase of pay could include IT certifications, language designated positions, and the Franklin Award. Supervisors should be encouraged to help get "just rewards" for their employees. OMSes nominated for an award should mention it in their EERs.

¶18. Suggestions for training/knowledge included: Cone days (working in the Department in the Cone which you will be serving, such as an ECON OMS in the EB bureau); sharing knowledge (e.g., via the OMS Webpage); registering for FSI Training early as slots fill quickly; using E-Diplomacy as a learning tool; opening up new skill codes by getting IT certification, for example (Note: Most conference participants felt options for training have opened up more in the past few years, but want it to continue. End note.); and having rotational assignments at post, such as one year in political and one year in management.

¶19. Suggestions for OMS representation included: improving OMS representation by planning for OMS needs in the MPP and in the budget (budget proposals should include training; promotions/awards; representation funds; regional travel; certification; and step increase pay); considering professional opportunities such as VIP visits, control officer duties, lateral specialist positions, and an AFSA representative for OMSes; and considering a bureau for OMSes.

¶20. Y tours provide excursions for OMSes at higher grades, thereby opening up mid and senior level OMS slots for entry level. Possibilities include OMS inspector for the OIG team; OMS assignment to the Hill (Pearson Program); a year of training (e.g., FSI, business school, self-designed professional needs/training). Other ideas included domestic out-of-cone-tours (e.g. HR/GSO/PA/DS training); assignment to the Pentagon, FCS, Homeland Security, etc.; rover trainer for EFMs and LES; Una Chapman Cox assignment; domestic exchange program (i.e., USEU, IDB); OMS recruiter i.e., traveling to job fairs); IRM assignment; and an assignment to expand e-Diplomacy project.

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Conclusion  
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¶21. So what is the OMS of the future? After two and a half days of discussion, participants reached a final determination: the OMS of the future will be a proactive, well trained, and knowledge sharing professional, an "A-Team" member of the Foreign Service.

¶22. This cable was cleared by OMS Coordinator in HR/CDA/ML/SPEC Claudia Romeo.

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